

or three separate forms of illicit activities and underworld operations." That was relevant enough to get quoted in a HSC staff report (9 HSC 93).

I recommend that you read and enjoy this article. You might not learn anything about the assassination, but it does say something about the methodology of historical analysis. When many of us think we know most of the answers, it's good to be reminded that we may not even know all of the questions.

FROM 'ECHOES OF CONSPIRACY'
(PAUL HOCH'S NEWSLETTER)
MARCH 28, 1983

Exclusive! EOC interviews Robert Ranftel:

EOC: First of all, let me start with the question that is on everyone's lips (as the HSC pathologist said to Dr. Humes [7 HSC 243]): are you guys serious?

RR: I'm afraid that we are. Everything in the article is true, and we tried to include every item of evidence that suggested LHO might have taken LSD. Naturally, we left out evidence that he might not have. In a way, I think that what we did is very similar to what Earl Warren did in his much longer piece, "Did LHO kill JFK?" One of the things we wanted to do with this article, which we saw more as a literary effort than an investigative one, was to show that what you find in an investigation depends a lot on what you set out to look for. If you want to show that Oswald, acting alone, killed Kennedy, there's a lot of evidence you can point to that shows just that. When the HSCA found itself with accoustical proof of a conspiracy, they went back to the evidence, and - what do you know - it suddenly turned out that there were earwitnesses whose testimony had been on the books for years and who suddenly became credible.

EOC: Okay, seriously, then: what's the bottom line? If Oswald did drop acid, does that have anything to do with November 22? Was he high in the TSBD when Kennedy was shot?

RR: The bottom line is - here's some new information about Oswald's life. I don't know what that has to do with November 22. I don't necessarily think that the reason he wasn't watching the parade with everyone else was that he was off somewhere getting stoned. But before the bottom line is drawn, you've got to add the possibility that he took drugs to the equation.

EOC: How did you come across this story?

RR: I was reading FBI files for David Lifton, who was working on "Best Evidence," and Marty Lee was reading CIA files on LSD and mind control. We would hang around together at Marty's house and talk to each other about what we found, and one day it occurred to us that with his new information about acid at Atsugi and my reading of Gillin's allegations from the New Orleans field office file, we had a new hypothesis: the Oswald-acid connection. We thought it an interesting story, albeit "National Enquirer" kind of stuff.

EOC: Can Gillin be taken seriously as a witness? I remember seeing his story in some CD many years ago, and I just assumed it was a typical crazy Oswald sighting.

RR: Jeff Cohen found and talked to Gillin. While he might easily have said, yeah, I thought it was Oswald once, but who knows?, instead he said, absolutely, I remember it as if it happened last month. Gillin also took issue with FBI allegations of his blindness. I haven't gone to N.O. and stood in front of Gillin, asking "How many fingers am I holding up?"

We're not convinced that it was Oswald who visited Gillin, but we are convinced that Gillin is convinced. Granted the N.O. DA's office has never

seemed to have too high a standard for employment, but with Gillin's story of the encounter and the various records that show that indeed, Oswald was at that time reading Huxley, and had been at one of the CIA's LSD-connected stations, the idea seems believable.

EOC: It seems really bizarre that anyone would ask a DA about LSD.

RR: Oswald seemed to enjoy doing bizarre things. It's bizarre to shoot at General Walker, or to create incidents with Bringuier in N.O. or at the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City. It's bizarre to pose with a rifle and "The Militant" or to leave a threatening note at the FBI. When you consider all the things that Oswald or Oswald impostors are reported to have done, this seems right in character(s).

EOC: One trouble with seeing Oswald as a dooper, I would think, is that people who took LSD talked about it - often wouldn't stop talking about it, in fact. Priscilla McMillan's book tells us a lot about Oswald - e.g., that he disliked fat women - but there is no reference to drugs in the index. Isn't it hard to believe that nobody knew of and talked about LHO's interest in drugs, if it really existed?

RR: Yes. However, there are a lot of facets to Oswald's life that he never talked about but that reasonable people suspect existed nonetheless. An organized crime connection, for instance, or a CIA one. He kept himself pretty busy jabbering about Cuba and Marxism, and who among us believes that? Tim Leary's incessant acid-babble at that time was the exception and not the rule. One didn't really hear Henry Luce or Cary Grant or the wife of a prominent Senator talk about acid, but they all took it. One of JFK's mistresses supposedly was "experienced." (Hint: she was married to a CIA official, although that's not how she is reported to have gotten the stuff.)

EOC: What's all this about a possible LSD connection to explain Oswald's visit to Mexico?

RR: That's not the strongest of allegations. Elena Garro de Paz claimed that she attended a "twist party" in Mexico City where Oswald was present. Her husband, Octavio Paz, has written about his involvement in LSD experimentation. Except for the proven LSD connection of her husband and how that added to our thesis, I wouldn't be interested in her story. The HSC did seem to take her pretty seriously, however.

EOC: Could Oswald have been on Mafia LSD, rather than CIA LSD? It's hard to believe that Marcello's people recruited Oswald by taking care of his \$25 bail, but if they were supplying him with controlled substances....

RR: I have to depend on the acid historian, Mr. Lee, for this information; he contends that acid did not fall into the hands of the mob for some years. In 1963 it was still available only from the CIA and some of the centers of higher learning in this country. (Tulane? I don't know.)

EOC: Did anything good get left out of the "Rolling Stone" article?

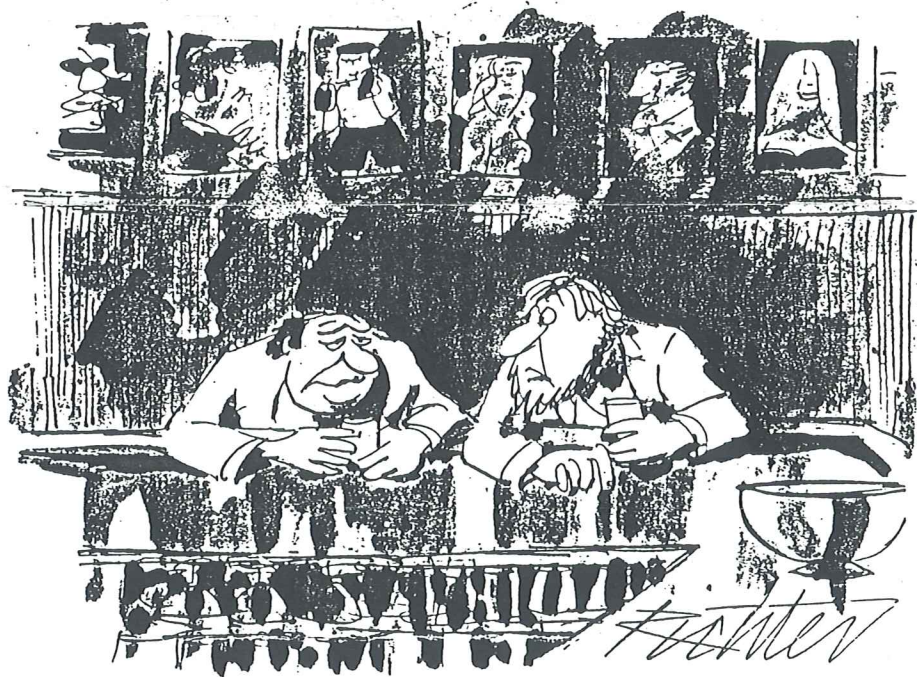
RR: The best evidence is there, but there is a lot more. For instance, just before Oswald's Mexico trip, Leary was quoted in newspapers as saying he was going to Mexico to form a community based on Huxley's writings. If one can postulate that LHO read Dr. Castro's pronouncements, why not Dr. Leary's as well? Tito Harper's parents contend that George DeMohrenschildt led their son into a life of drugs in Mexico. I wonder what drugs.

EOC: What do you think writing this article will do to your reputation? What will plugging it do to mine?

RR: One of the things the article shows, I hope, is that there is still a great deal that the independent researcher can do. There are still interesting people out there and interesting questions to ask them. You don't need 25 FBI agents and \$2 million to find things out. And there is still an audience for your discoveries. I don't really want to be known as the man who invented the LSD connection (or the Bronson film, for that matter), but I don't mind at all being known as someone who, 20 years after the fact, is still digging away.

I was impressed by how many people noticed the article. At this stage of

the game, I don't think there's such a thing as bad publicity for the case, as long as the information is documented and the investigation responsibly done. Publishers and readers will still pay attention to new information; that means that we should continue. Okay, the LHO-LSD connection seems somehow silly, but the investigation of those facts and the facts themselves are serious. Until we've compiled all the facts, the picture is not complete. Earl Warren didn't have it, the HSCA didn't have it, and chances are we still don't have it.



"Then we've agreed that all the evidence isn't in, and that even if all the evidence were in, it still wouldn't be definitive."